

Chemical imports rose 20pc in first quarter

By Peter Hill
Industrial Correspondent

Chemical imports in the first quarter of this year rose by 20 per cent, and although the rate of import growth over the rest of 1978 is likely to slow down considerably, the level will be substantially higher than in 1977.

According to the latest survey of the industry undertaken by Whitehall, the value of imports in the first quarter amounted to £731.1m at current prices, compared with £616.6m in the final three months of last year.

The survey, published in the latest issue of the weekly government journal, *Trade and Industry*, was attributed to the general conditions of overcapacity throughout Western Europe and the artificially low prices this has engendered.

Output of the industry rose by nearly 2 per cent in the first quarter of this year, the survey noted, following a fall of about the same scale in the final three months of 1977.

This year chemical production is expected to show "modest growth", reflecting a slow increase in activity in the economy as a whole.

The survey, which follows the latest quarterly survey undertaken by the Chemical Industries Association, said output prices were up nearly 3 per cent in the first three months of the year, while the volume of investment fell slightly on the levels achieved in the final three months of 1977.

Declining profitability characterized the financial performance of international chemical companies, according to the latest financial survey* of the industry published by the weekly journal, *Chemical Age*. Only a few companies showed increases of over 20 per cent in 1977 profits compared with the previous year.

According to the survey, only Du Pont, the American company, among the 15 showing the highest value of sales, increased its profits, with a rise of 11.9 per cent. That was sufficient to take Du Pont from being the world's third most profitable chemical concern into first place, overtaking Dow Chemical and ICI. United Kingdom companies accounted for 9.1 per cent of world chemical sales last year.

*CA 200, published by *Chemical Age* at £5.

Chemical imports rose 20pc in first quarter.

By Peter Hill Industrial Correspondent.

The Times (London, England), Friday, Jul 28, 1978; pg. 18; Issue 60365. (354 words)

Category: Business and Finance

© Times Newspapers Limited

Gale Document Number:CS303006460